

VZCZCXRO6378
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK RUEHLN RUEHSK RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHKB #0106/01 0401344
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 091344Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0737
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHMHZ/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000106

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR FOR MATT BRYZA; DRL FOR KAREN STEWART

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: FM MAMMADYAROV LETTER TO SECRETARY CLINTON

1. (SBU) Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov passed the following letter to Ambassador Derse February 4 for transmittal to Secretary Clinton. The letter was faxed February 5 to EUR/CARC.

Begin Text:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Azerbaijan

February 3, 2009

Her Excellency Mrs. Hillary Clinton
State Secretary of the United States of America

Dear Madam Secretary,

I have the honor to express my sincere congratulations and warmest wishes on the occasion of your appointment to the position of State Secretary of the United States of America.

I am confident that your experience will contribute to the development of a mutually advantageous relationship between our nations, as well as cooperation between foreign policy departments of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United States both on bilateral levels and within international organizations.

I am pleased to underline with great satisfaction the level of the strategic partnership existing between our two countries. Today we enjoy a shared vision of global security, Euro-Atlantic values and energy initiatives. We contribute to the international antiterrorism operations and our troops have served shoulder-to-shoulder within international stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq. With our joint efforts and fruitful cooperation in the energy field we have succeeded in the development of Caspian energy resources and their delivery to the world markets through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipelines that are critical for European and global energy security.

The efforts of the United States as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group are of particular importance for a peaceful and fair resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict, as a result of which almost 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory is under occupation by Armenia and around 1 million Azerbaijanis have been ethnically cleansed from their homes. We believe that the United States will do its utmost for the lasting and durable resolution of this conflict, a major threat to peace and stability in the South Caucasus region, based on the relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and OSCE decisions. We are

ready to continue our work with the U.S. for the settlement of this conflict in accordance with the norms and principles of international law within the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan.

We are firmly convinced that the conflict resolution will facilitate the strengthening of democracy, rule of law, human rights, civil society and market economy in all South Caucasus countries.

Taking this opportunity I have the honor to extend an invitation to you to pay an official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan at any convenient time for you.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration and esteem.

Sincerely,

/s/

Elmar Mammadyarov

End Text.

12. (SBU) Comment: The Foreign Minister's letter refers to cooperation on security, including anti-terrorism and Afghanistan, and energy, as expected. The Foreign Minister also predictably raises the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Minsk Group process, emphasizing as usual settlement with

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respect to Azerbaijan,s "territorial integrity." Of interest is the Foreign Minister's reference to continuing work on democracy and human rights, which he suggests will move forward after conflict resolution.

DERSE